

## WEIGHT-LOSS OPTIONS

# Six common diet plans

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

When it comes to weight loss, there is no shortage of advice. Check any magazine rack or bookstore, and you are bound to discover that latest and greatest cure for being overweight.

Some even work — for a while. Unfortunately, people often find diets hard to sustain, in part because they tire of avoiding certain foods, loading up on others, or feeling deprived and hungry. And their diet is often temporary, something to endure for a while before returning to former ways. As a result, any lost pounds come right back once the diet stops.

Here is a summary of six common weight-loss strategies, and the questions to ask yourself to determine if any of them will help you make the lifestyle changes required to maintain a healthy weight.

### Low-fat diets

Cutting down on high-fat foods can help you cut down on your daily calories and thus help you lose weight. So why do not low-fat diets always work? Even a low-fat diet can lead to weight gain when people ignore the total

amount of calories they are eating and regularly exceed their daily calorie goals. Too many calories from any source, low-fat foods included, can add pounds.

### Low-carb diets

Followers of these eating plans believe that a decrease in carbs results in lower insulin levels, which causes the body to burn stored fat for energy. Initially, when you follow a low-carb diet you may lose more weight than if you followed a low-fat, low-calorie diet. However, this advantage slowly decreases after the first six months. After one year, the amount of weight loss is about the same between the two diets.

A low-carb diet does not appear to be any easier to maintain than are other diets. Studies comparing low-carb diets and low-fat diets have found that after a year, people drop out of both diets at similar rates. This suggests that the low-carb diet, like so many diets, is no easier to stick to long term. Well-known low-carb diets include the Atkins diet, Zone diet and Protein Power.

### Glycemic-index diets

The glycemic index ranks carbohydrate-containing foods based



on their effects on blood sugar. Similar to the theory behind low-carb diets, most low-glycemic-index diets claim that lowering blood sugar levels leads to weight loss. You may have difficulty following a diet that emphasizes only foods with a low-glycemic-index ranking. Many factors other

than food influence your blood sugar level, including your age and weight, the type of food preparation, and the portion size. The South Beach diet is an example of a low-glycemic-index diet.

### Meal replacements

Some meals provide less calories, but are nutritionally complete.

You replace one or two meals a day, such as breakfast and lunch, with a low-calorie shake or meal bar. Then you eat a healthy third meal, between 600 and 700 calories, of your own choosing. Meal replacements — if used as directed — can be as effective as other weight-loss diets.

### Meal providers

Some people have a difficult time knowing what they are supposed to eat. Busy schedules leave little time for meal preparation. In such cases, relying on ready-made meals eaten at home may deserve consideration. These services can be expensive.

### Group approaches

You do not have to lose weight alone. Group programmes can support your efforts, giving you eating plans, exercise recommendations and support from others on the same dietary path. After joining, expect regular weigh-ins, group meetings and activity sessions.

### Does the plan fit your needs?

How do you know if a weight-loss plan fits your needs and lifestyle? Ask yourself these questions.

### Does the programme:

- Include various foods from the major food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains (particularly whole grains), low-fat dairy products, lean protein sources (meat, poultry, fish, beans and other legumes), nuts and seeds?
- Include foods you like and that you would enjoy eating for a lifetime — not just for several weeks or months?

- Feature foods you can easily find in your local grocery store?
- Allow you to eat your favorite foods, or better yet, all foods?
- Fit your lifestyle and budget?

- Include proper amounts of nutrients and calories to help you lose weight safely and effectively?
- Encourage regular physical activity?

If you answer no to any of these questions, the weight-loss programme is not right for you, as you probably will not stay with it. Successful weight loss requires permanent changes to your eating and physical activity habits. This means you need to find a weight-loss strategy that you can embrace for life.



A diner pours olive oil on a salad at a restaurant. A Mediterranean diet rich in fruits and vegetables — already known to protect against heart disease — also appears to help ward off diabetes, Spanish researchers said recently.

## Mediterranean diet may also help stop diabetes

A Mediterranean diet rich in fruits and vegetables — already known to protect against heart disease — also appears to help ward off diabetes, Spanish researchers said recently.

The study published in the British Medical Journal showed that people who stuck closely to the diet were 83 percent less likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those who did not.

"The new thing is that we have been able to assess adherence to a Med diet and the incidence of diabetes in people who were initially healthy," said Miguel Martinez-Gonzalez, an epidemiologist at the University of Navarra in Spain, who led the study. "We didn't expect such a high reduction."

The World Health Organization estimates more than 180 million people worldwide have diabetes — a number likely to more than double by 2030 as more nations adopt a Western lifestyle.

Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90 percent of all cases and is closely linked to obesity and heart disease. The condition accounts for an estimated 6 percent of all global deaths.

For their study the Spanish researchers recruited 13,000 former students at the university with an average age of

38 who had no history of diabetes. They tracked their dietary habits and health over an average four years.

The volunteers also initially completed a food frequency questionnaire to measure the kinds of food they ate. The list included questions on the use of fats and oils, cooking methods and dietary supplements.

People who strictly adhered to a Mediterranean diet full of vegetables, fish and healthy fats such as olive oil, and low in red meat, dairy products and alcohol had lower odds of diabetes.

Only about 40 people in the study developed diabetes but Martinez-Gonzalez added in a telephone interview that further study is needed to confirm the diet's protective effects.

But the fact that the protection appeared to extend to older people, smokers and volunteers with a family history of diabetes — a group all the more prone to the disease — shows the diet works, Martinez-Gonzalez said.

"These higher risk participants with better adherence to the diet, however, had a lower risk of diabetes, suggesting that the diet might have a substantial potential for prevention," the researchers wrote.

Source: British Medical Journal

## New drug-resistance test gives hope to TB fight

REUTERS, Geneva

A new diagnostic test unveiled by the World Health Organisation (WHO) will allow doctors in poor countries to find out within hours — instead of months — whether patients have drug-resistant tuberculosis.

Mario Raviglione, director of the WHO's Stop TB department, said the molecular test developed by Hain Lifescience and Innogenetics represented a big breakthrough in the fight against tuberculosis, a contagious respiratory ailment that kills 1.5 million people a year.

"We are capable now of making a diagnosis of MDR-TB within hours," he said, using the acronym for multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, an infection that cannot be cured with a standard course of antibiotics.

The new test can determine directly from a patient's saliva whether the tuberculosis bacteria can be treated with the two main antibiotics, Isoniazid and Rifampicin, making it easier to prescribe the drug to cure the disease and prevent its spread.

Previous tests required saliva samples to be incubated for as many as 60 days in order for microorganisms to grow and be tested against different antibiotic compounds.

Drug-resistant tuberculosis strains are particularly lethal for HIV/AIDS sufferers and those

with weak immune systems. Errors in prescribing antibiotics can worsen drug resistance problems and lead to XDR-TB, an untreatable form that has emerged in 49 countries including the United States, France, Russia, South Africa, Brazil and Australia.

The Germany-based Hain Lifescience is also working on a test to diagnose XDR, which remains in an experimental stage, a WHO spokesman said.

Lesotho will be the first country to get the lab equipment and training to use the new diagnostics under a programme supported by the WHO's partners UNICEF and the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, Raviglione told a news briefing.

The other countries due to receive support to use the new test in the next four years are: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Moldova, Myanmar, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

The WHO said this deployment, as well as efforts to make second-line antibiotics more affordable, should increase to 15 percent the proportion of patients with multi-drug resistant tuberculosis who are diagnosed and treated appropriately. At present, that rate is only 2 percent.



A health worker examines a smear for TB. A new diagnostic test unveiled by the WHO will allow doctors in poor countries to find out within hours — instead of months — whether patients have drug-resistant tuberculosis.

## Is my baby getting enough breast milk?

If a baby passes urine more than 6 times a day, it means mother is having sufficient milk. Another parameter is weight gain. If a baby gains daily 15-25 grams, it indicates that baby is having enough milk from mother. So there is not need of formula milk at all.

DR M KARIM KHAN

Human breast milk is the best food in the early days of life. Parents want to give their babies the best. More than two decades of research have established that breast milk is perfect-most to nourish infants and protect them from illness. Breast-fed infants have lower rates of hospital admissions, ear infection, diarrhoea, rashes, allergies and other medical problems than bottle fed babies.

Exclusive breast feeding for the first six months of life is very important specially the colostrums (secretion from breast immediately after child birth) and after that weaning food may be added gradually. Breast feeding can be continued two years or more as the mother wishes.

Some mother say that they do not have enough milk and asks paediatricians to prescribe formula milk. Answer to this question is — if a baby passes urine more than 6 times a day, it means mother is having sufficient milk. Another parameter is weight gain. If a baby gains daily 15-25 grams, it indicates that baby is having enough milk from mother. So there is not need of formula milk at all.

The primary benefit of breast milk is nutritional. Human milk

contains just the right amount of fatty acids, lactose, water and amino acid for human digestion, brain development and growth. Cows' milk contains a different type of protein that is good for calves but not for human infants.

Breast fed babies have fewer illness because breast milk contains enough antibodies from mother to protect from different

A breast fed babies digestive tract contains large amount of Lactobacillus bifidus, a beneficial bacterium that prevents the growth of harmful bacteria. Breast milk comes straight from the mother. As such it is sterile and there is no chance of contamination. But feeding from bottle is always having a chance of contamination and thus

from the warmth and presence of mother specially when there is skin to skin contact during feeding.

Nursing is also a nature contraceptive, although not very reliable. Frequent nursing suppresses ovulation, making it less likely for a nursing mother to menstruate, ovulate and get pregnant.

Most of our people are poor. They are not able to buy foods to feed their babies properly. In this case breast milk has a great economic value also.

Many times mothers are afraid of giving milk to their baby as they are taking some medication. Consult your physician about the drugs when you are nursing. Besides these, nursing mother should avoid bad habits like smoking and alcohol intake.

Breast milk is a dynamic fluid that changes in composition throughout the day and throughout the course of lactation.

In short, we can say that breast milk is ideal, economic, sterile, protective, nutritious God gifted food for the baby. We all should promote, protect and support breast feeding.

The writer is an Associate Professor of Department of Paediatrics at Community Based Medical College (CBMC), Mymensingh. E-mail: mkarim\_khan@yahoo.com



illness. About 80 percent of cells in the breast milk are macrophages (the cells which kill bacteria, fungus, viruses). Breast fed babies are protected in varying degrees from a number of illnesses including pneumonia, bronchiolitis, bronchitis, botulism, staphylococcal infection, influenza, ear infection, measles, german measles, diarrhoea etc.

diarrhoeal diseases are common in bottle fed baby.

Nursing breast milk has psychological benefit for both mother and child. The interaction and connection between mother and baby becomes stronger through breast feeding. Many psychologists believe that nursing baby enjoys a sense of secu-

## Be smart: Prevent your excessive sweating

DR MD ABEDUR RAHMAN

Almost everyone sweats as a normal reaction to stress such as heat, exercise, emotional factors. However, some people sweat excessively at armpits, on the hands or feet, causing severe social and psychological embarrassment. These people suffer from a condition known as primary focal hyperhidrosis. It affects one in twenty people worldwide. Some people are so embarrassed by this condition that they never seek help from their medical doctors.

Hyperhidrosis can either be generalised or localised to specific parts of the body. Hands, feet, axillae and the groin area are among the most active regions of perspiration due to the relatively high concentration of sweat glands; however, any part of the body may be affected. Primary hyperhidrosis is found to start during adolescence or even before.

Excessive sweating impedes the performance of many routine activities. Things like driving, taking tests and simply grasping objects are severely hampered by sweaty hands.

Some hyperhidrosis sufferers feel they have to avoid situations where they will come into physical contact with others. Interviews, a common source of anxiety for many people, are particularly distressing for hyperhidrosis patients. Most often, it is the handshake before and after the interview that they will be stressing most about. Hiding embarrassing sweat spots under the armpits limits the

sufferers arm movements and pretense. In severe cases, shirts must be changed several times during the day.

Many careers present challenges for hyperhidrosis sufferers; cooks and chefs, doctors and people working with computers can be affected by the social aspect of their condition. The risk of de-hydration can limit the ability of sufferers to function in



extremely hot conditions without reasonable access to a source of hydration as well as cause a risk of mineral and salt imbalance from excessive sweating.

Many cases of excessive sweating can be controlled by applying products such as Drysol (20 percent aluminium chloride in alcohol) on your armpits and wrapping plastic wrap over them before you go to sleep. If your armpits itch

or burn, remove the plastic and wash the area with soap and water. This process reduces sweating for six to eight days. You can repeat the procedure when you start to sweat heavily again. Most antiperspirants contain aluminum, which is safe for external use.

In 1998, Dr Walter Shelley of the Medical College of Ohio developed a breakthrough treatment for severe hand sweating when he injected botulinum toxin (Botox) into patients' palms. The patients stopped sweating on their palms for 4 to 12 months.

Another possible treatment for sweaty hands is a device called Drionic, where you place your hands on a special wet pad and have a weak current run through your hands. Scopolamine can also help to prevent sweating, but it can make you dizzy so you must take it in very low doses. Propranolol 15 mg pills will reduce sweating for a few hours, but it can also make you feel dizzy.

Many people sweat profusely because they are nervous about appearing before an audience. A propranolol pill taken one half hour before public speaking or any other high-pressure event can prevent the sweating, shaking and other effects of stage fright. Propranolol is a beta blocker commonly used to control blood pressure; it is a safe and very effective way to get rid of even the worst stage fright. Check with your doctor.

The writer is a teacher in Dhaka Medical College. E-mail: abeddm@yahoo.com

## Remain happy during pregnancy

Stress in pregnancy raises risks for baby: study

REUTERS, Chicago

Women who are stressed about money, relationships and other problems during pregnancy may give birth to babies who are predisposed to allergies and asthma, U.S. researchers said.

The findings, presented at a meeting of the American Thoracic Society in Toronto, suggest a mother's stress during pregnancy may have lasting consequences for her child.

"This research adds to a growing body of evidence that links maternal stress such as that precipitated by financial problems or relationship issues to changes in children's developing immune systems, even during pregnancy," Dr. Rosalind Wright of Harvard Medical School in Boston said.

Wright and colleagues found mothers who were the most distressed during preg-

nancy were most likely to give birth to infants with higher levels of immunoglobulin E or IgE — an immune system compound — even though their mothers had only mild exposure to allergens during pregnancy.

Studies in animals have found that a mother's stress amplifies the effects of allergen exposure on the immune system of the developing offspring. The Harvard team set out to see if they could find the same in humans.

They measured levels of IgE from the umbilical cord blood of 387 newborns in Boston.

Babies whose mothers were the most stressed out — but who had low exposure to dust mites in the home — still had high levels of IgE in their cord blood, a finding that suggests that stress increased the immune response to dust exposure.